Party Chief Wins Vote In Lithuania

New President Defied Moscow

Associated Press

MOSCOW, Jan. 15—Lithuania's Communist Party leader was overwhelmingly elected president of the Soviet Baltic republic today in a clear endorsement of his defiant stand toward Moscow and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The vote for Algirdas Brazauskas in the Lithuanian legislature was 228 to 4 with 19 abstentions, the Soviet news agency Tass reported.

The legislature also approved a measure that requires Soviet military personnel to have lived in the republic for 10 years before they can vote in elections there, effectively restricting the right of servicemen to vote in Feb. 24 local balloting to those born in Lithuania and a few long-serving soldiers and sailors.

Brazauskas, 57, backed the Lithuanian Communist Party's Dec. 20 decision to break with the ruling party organization in Moscow, the first such defection from the party since the Communist state was founded more than 70 years ago.

Gorbachev, who had denounced the move, spent three days in Lithuania last week trying to persuade the republic's Communist leaders to reverse their decision, but the Lithuanians refused to budge.

The Soviet leader concluded his visit by saying he saw "no tragedy" in a multiparty political system—a shift from his previous public insistence on one-party rule. Gorbachev pleaded for unity repeatedly, but Lithuanian public opinion strongly supports independence for the republic, which was forcibly annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940.